LEFT CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

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Left must unite

NDP at Crossroads

By Zane Boyd
Fort York NDP

Clearly we are a party in crisis. We have a crisis in government, in which we are seen as status quo neo-liberals. We have a crisis in leadership, which lacks any real strategy to counter the corporate sector's continentalist, anti-labour, anti-social agenda. And we have a crisis in our membership, which is increasingly demoralized and passive.

The need to build a broad left within the party, to consolidate and put forward a socialist alternative, has never been greater.

We in the NDP Left Caucus don't believe that the current situation is inevitable and hopeless. We don't accept that our hands are tied, that we are doomed to drift to the right. Nor that we are destined ultimately to fail in this historic opportunity as a labour government in Canada's largest and richest province. There is an alternative.

Our party's crisis didn't begin with the current recession. It didn't begin with our caving in to big business pressure and the dogmas of the deficit and the market. Nor with our reneging on long standing reform policies and on the very platform on which we were elected.

Origins of the crisis

The crisis goes back much further, to when our leadership began turning the party more and more into a purely electoral, parliamentary, popularity machine -- depoliticizing the riding associations, and marginalizing the party's base and involvement in the various extraparliamentary popular movements. Membership and fund raising were given over to mail order marketing. Political education, discussion and interest among the membership withered. The outcome is now a totally top-down, executive-run party, trimmed for the sole purpose of running the state store. The leadership has become ever more bureaucratic, paternalistic and patronizing, guided more by a desire to be respectable and to play the gentlemanly, diplomatic parliamentary game than to boldly fight for the program it was founded and elected on.

We need a programmatic alternative to the leadership's lack of one. An anti-capitalist, pro-labour, socialist alternative. We need a leadership prepared to fight for and defend such a program. There is no other solution to the capitalist crisis in this province and country.

A social and political movement

But this alone is not enough. We need to rebuild the party itself as a social and political movement, unified with the trade union and various other popular movements. This is not mere nostalgic sentiment. Such a movement--active, mobilized--is absolutely essential to defending, bolstering and sustaining our government in power and to enabling it to carry out the necessary far-reaching initiatives with broad public support.

We need to rekindle political activism at the riding level, with NDP-ers engaging themselves in the labour and the various other extraparliamentary social movements that have been its traditional base of support and source of membership. At the same time, we need to bring the ranks of these movements themselves full swing into involvement in the party at every level.

How would such a revitalized, re-activated NDP elected in office respond to the corporate recession, the attacks on jobs, on wages, on social programs, on education and health? How could we then answer Mulroney's reneging on transfer payments?

Activism in power

By placing the government's vast resources at their disposal, we could mobilize together with labour, women, visible minorities, the elderly, students, teachers, tenants, the co-op housing sector, farmers, health care

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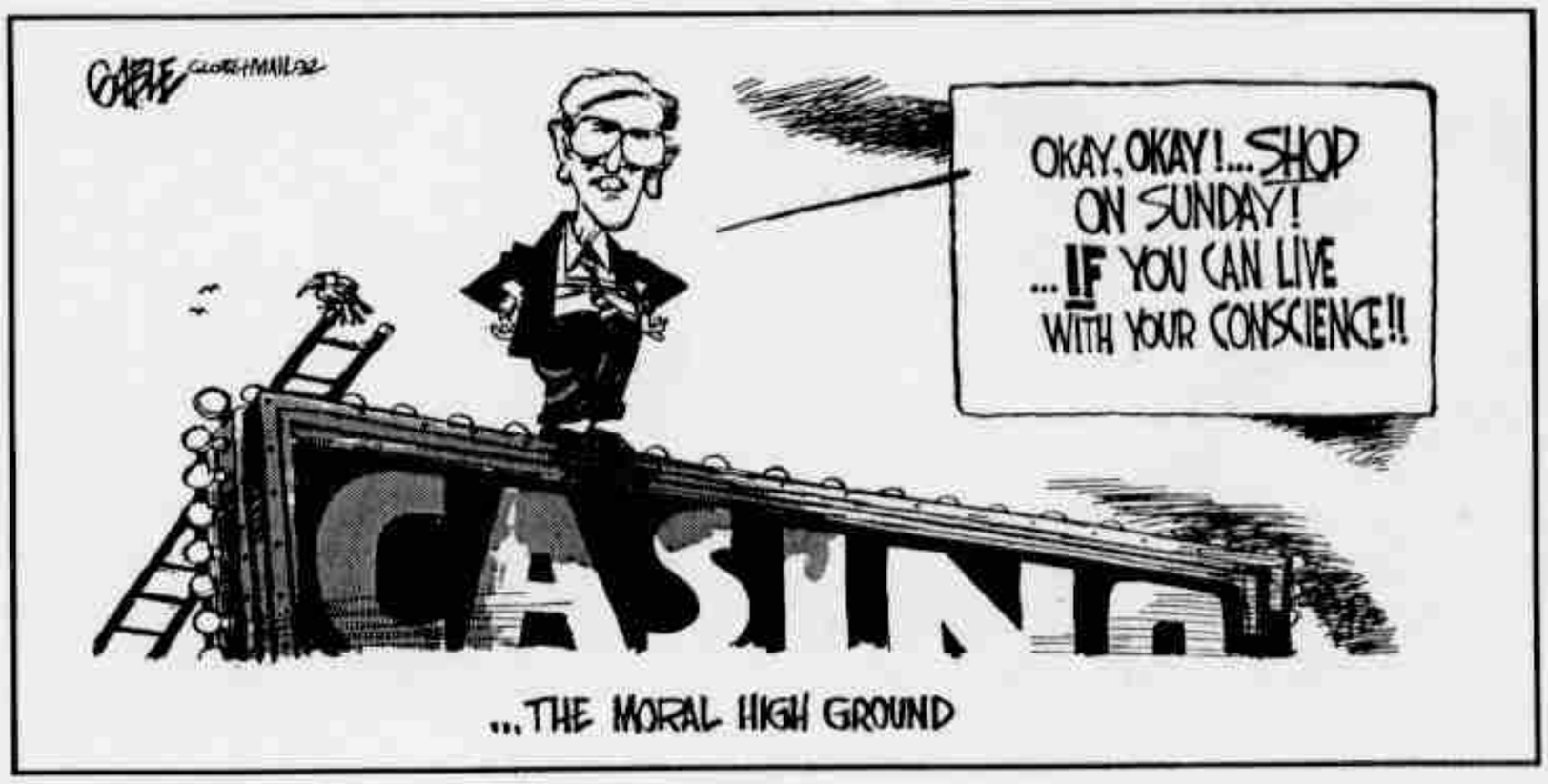

Which way for the NDP:

Casino Socialism or Democratic Planning?

By Harry Kopyto
St Andrew-St. Patrick NDP

Casino socialism or a plan to meet the needs of human beings? That issue has been posed at the June 17-19th convention of the Ontario New Democratic Party by the economic crisis eroding Ontario's industrial base.

Elected in a burst of hopes that a New Democratic Party Government would protect tenants, stop cutbacks in social services, tax the wealthy and protect the interests of working people in a recession, the NDP government has had difficulty on all these matters. We are a party of reform without the ability to make reforms.

The reason for this has nothing to do with whether our leaders are wise or determined or sincere. It is the erosion of our industrial base in Ontario and the consequent unemployment and slow-down of the economy that is behind the difficulties we have had keeping out economic promises.

In good times, with a booming economy, expanding investments and strong purchasing power, many of the reforms that we are committed to could

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Democratic Plan Needed

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be achieved. In fact, it was during the period of an expanding economy after the second world war that major strides were made either under pressure from the CCF and the labour movement, to institute a public pension system, establish medicare as a universal right and strengthen unemployment insurance schemes and other social services. But times are different now.

So what do we do? Do we just wait for good times to come along?

There are many persons in the NDP who despair of the situation. The upturn in the economy has yet to materialize. Meanwhile, a government that was elected by people to protect their interests in an impending recession is overseeing the multiplication of food banks, cutbacks in social services and healthcare and even is imposing severe wage restraints on civil servants.

There is a sense of inevitability about the situation at present. Many persons who voted for the NDP enthusiastically now defend it almost mechanically and out of a sense of duty. There is a growing sense of fatigue, disappointment and even desperation. Perhaps the best example of the dead end many New Democrats feel their party faces is the desperate act which led us to legalize casino gambling in Ontario—expressing the need of our government to increase its tax base and the sobering reality that the government is ready to cash in on the illusions of those who will waste their meagre resources in a gamble to better themselves.

There is a solution. The economic crisis that we have at present is far from accidental or inevitable. It is fundamentally explained by accelerating competition between major megacorporations throughout the world. Globalization is a code word for finding the cheapest way of producing products or providing services and the most aggressive way of marketing them. The decision to close down viable plants like GM in St. Catharines and Caterpillar in Brampton was made on the basis of strategic planning--to consolidate production near markets in order to maximize profits.

True enough, the NDP government has intervened in the economy, especially faced with the wholesale destruction of entire communities and the loss of thousands of jobs--in Dehavilland, in Algoma and when other critical sectors of our economy were threatened with virtual extinction.

But are these governmental bailouts effective solutions? The result of these actions usually invoke what appears to be a compromise between the different interests involved: workers, financiers and owners of private industry. But, as in Algoma, a solution may be more apparent than real. While the community was "saved", thousands still lost their jobs, thousands of others are forced to take deep wage cuts at a time when they already face economic difficulties, environmental protection measures are abandoned or loosened at an incalculable cost, the government is on the book for guaranteeing investments in a area which private capital doesn't want to touch, and the workers become "owners" of an industry where they still continue to have no say in their daily work lives.

Despite these "compromises," the basic problem remains: can the company survive attempting to sell steel in a global economy in which the price of steel is depressed and supply appears to outweigh demand?

The solution to our economic problems will require our government to undertake fundamental initiatives rather than engaging in stop-gap measures. It will require planning for production for human need, just as the megacorporations plan their production for profit. Just as the deindustrialization of Ontario is an inherent part of the planned restructuring by U.S.-dominated corporations to make them more competitive, we need to develop an industrial strategy that incorporates a plan to meet the needs of the residents of Ontario. In the case of Algoma, for example, if the housing industry does not build houses, there is no market for steel production. A government plan could compel the housing industry to build houses or undertake the job itself to meet a current existing human need and create the market for steel and thereby revive the steel industry at the same time.

Such measures require an integrated vision of a planned economy in which each sector of the economy relates harmoniously to each other. With the proper balance between supply and demand, capacity and need, human ingenuity and social priority, the hap-

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Clear CUPW Workers

By John Glenn
Mississauga West

Abject formalism and propriety plague the NDP government as Queen's Park tries desperately to placate big business. Over the years previous NDP oppositions have criticized Tory-Liberal regimes for their use of injunctions and threats of prison to intimidate striking workers. But once in power, our NDP government has begun to use the old anti-labour rules of the political game.

In the 1991 postal strike, three postal workers were charged with injunction violations. Toronto local CUPW president Andre Kolompar, local fifth vice-president Jim Lawrence, and local member Ron Pollard were arrested when they tried to prevent Canada Post management from using scab and casual workers to move non-essential mail.

The ONDP leadership was so adamant in proceeding with these cases that government members and staffers were told by the Attorney General not even to discuss the matter with opponents of these legal actions. The end result was jail terms for the three CUPW members.

There are certain ironies in the government's prosecution of the three postal workers. The NDP is supposedly committed programmatically to the abolition of conservative pro-management injunctions. In quiet liberal fashion, Queen's Park ignored their labour base by trying to be neutral. In reality, the end result was a silent partnership in management's team. There could be no neutral ground. Previous governments at Queen's Park used discretionary powers to further and buttress their pro-business outlook and political safety. The Tories withdrew charges against the RCMP for spying on labour activists while the Liberals quashed litigation against Bob Rae who had been arrested in a protest against Temagami forest destruction. They recognized their class and government interests. Our ONDP government's purportedly neutral stance on injunctions is also riddled with timidity. When pro-choice activists requested that Solicitor-General Alan Pilkey use injunctions to limit the distance of anti-abortion protests and control their antics at clinics, the requests were denied. The neutrality was spineless.

It is not too late for the NDP government to make amends for this injustice against the CUPW three. The best way would be for the Attorney-General Howard Hampton to provide pardons for these three workers who should be congratulated, not criminalized, for their principled act.

Labour, NDP Need their own Press

THE MEDIA ONLY TALKS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSED MEXICAN FREE TRADE ACCORD. HOW CAN WE IN THE UNIONS GET IN ON THE DEBATE?
MAYBE WE COULD DECLARE OURSELVES AN ENDANGERED SPECIES...
LAY OFF NOTICE
©CHRISTIAN

By Joseph Steinbok
Oriole NDP

Who defends labour? Who support the workers of this province? Who writes favourable reports on strikes? And who writes about the accomplishments of labour?

When the teachers went on strike, what papers supported them? None. Not a one. The mass media portrayed to the public that the teachers are greedy, wanting more in these hard times.

How does labour reach the general public? By what means do they express their wants and goals? What do they do to educate the public about their stand on working in hazardous conditions while the bosses rake in their profits?

Some workers are represented by unions, but the majority are not. The NDP is for all workers of thus province. It is high time the ONDP put out a newsletter aimed at working people so that they can get the truth. The news media is not out to save the working class or to defend it. It is high time that the unions and the NDP to put out our own paper telling workers how it really is. Why do workers go out on strike? Why they are fighting for their rights

Who defends the NDP? Labour does. Because, through the NDP, labour has a voice in power. It is labour who must back the party and give it direction forward into a new future. It is up to labour to take on the right-wing offensive head on, because the because, bosses will do everything they can to bring the NDP and labour down. They will use their control of the news media with all that money can buy in order to achieve their goal. And that is to have labour submit and take a backseat in the development of this province.

The right-wing agenda has been set by big business. Business fears the labour movement and the NDP. What is happening now is a realignment of power. The weak will fall by the wayside. The companies that survive will go on to reap greater profits in the name of free enterprise at the cost of many jobs.

The larger companies will come into the void produced by the failure of the weak companies in order to control a larger share of the market. They have a tool, as old as capitalism--close down the factories, set the workers against the unions, and sit back and wait. They call it a cleansing, but the weak will suffer. The unions will be crushed and the right will hold all the cards.

We need a paper aimed at all the people in this province, to tell them the truth, to educate them in their rights, and to show them that the labour movement and the NDP stand for them.

We need a paper that is also open to all the popular movements and organizations--to women, minorities, students, gays, lesbians, the elderly, and so on--to put forward their views, to discuss all the issues before us. With this kind of paper, we could help the people of Ontario defend their interests and fight for their needs against those of big business.

Broad Left Can Revitalize Party

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workers, the disabled, environmentalists, the cultural and the academic sectors, and the anti-poverty and unemployment activists in their tens of thousands to take on Mulroney's blackmail, march on Ottawa, challenge the corporate free trade agenda, block plant shutdowns, preserve universality, and counter the cutbacks and the assaults at every level.

We could use our government offices and resources to convene, on our own initiative, not only a constituent assembly on the Constitution, but one on the economy and social policy as well, with representatives of all these various popular movements and organizations debating and deciding on alternatives to the corporate-planned recession and economic restructuring.

Such an alternative would not only be empowering, not only effective; it would be **truly** democratic.

Of course, there are those both within and without the party who will scoff at such dreaming. But if this is not possible, not acceptable, what is? Falling in along with everyone else to the new economic order? Foregoing this historic opportunity of NDP power out of resignation or cynicism? Because, for what it's worth, that's what the NDP election represents -- the desire and the opportunity of the labour movement and other popular forces in three provinces to have their party defend and advance their interests against the pro-business agenda of the other parties.

Our responsibility

It is useless to simply deplore the current crisis in the party. Nor is it enough to sit back and criticise Rae's or Romanow's or Harcourt's failures and inadequacies, much worse to simply wait for any or all to be defeated in future elections. The crisis in the NDP is not only the responsibility of its leaders; it is also the responsibility of all those, inside and out, who abdicate the nitty-gritty need and challenge to build the broadest possible socialist alternative within Canada's party of labour.

Individual effort by party left-wingers alone is not enough. Acting on our own, around this or that issue, in one or another area of the party, we will find it impossible to counter a centralized leadership with its professional apparatus. We need to exchange and coordinate our various experiences and perspectives through collective organization. We need to develop a common, comprehensive program to effectively challenge the leadership's rightward drift and to which we can win the party.

This is the aim and purpose of the Left Caucus. Join in our efforts at this month's convention. Participate in the various Left Caucus policy and organizing meetings throughout the convention. Support those resolutions and those candidates that support the socialist alternative.

WIN THE NDP TO SOCIALISM!
HELP BUILD THE LEFT CAUCUS!

We Need *Your* Help!

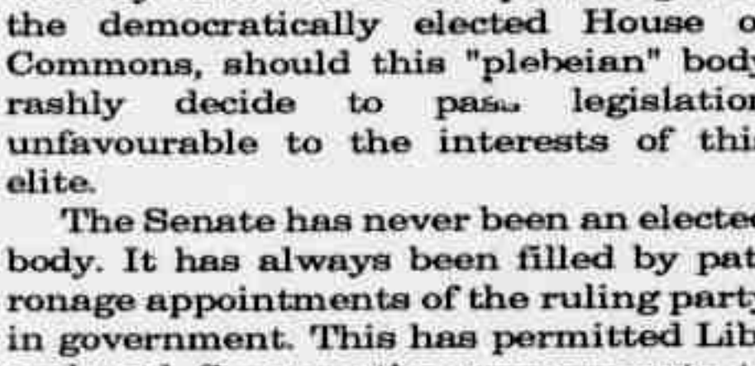
The ONDP faces a crisis. Bob Rae stated publicly in May that "Free trade is here to stay and Canadians might as well get used to it." How can we be sure that the leader who dumped public auto insurance won't dump the Labour Reform Act when the pressures get too high? By building the Left Caucus as the united voice of the organized left in the Party. The struggle for an accountable government that will stand by policy convention resolutions will not be won be merely wishing it to happen. We need to unite, coordinate and organize. Contribute to our efforts. Send your cheque or money order to the Ontario Left Caucus, Box 39, 552 Church Street, Toronto, M4Y 2E3

Reform the Senate?

By Gord Doctorow
Oriole NDP

When the "Fathers of Confederation" established the Senate in 1867, they were very candid about what this body represented -- an institution to protect the interests of the privileged wealthy and powerful minority that ruled Canada. Although later labelled as the body of "sober second thought," the real role of the Senate was to provide the wealthy elite with a veto power against the democratically elected House of Commons, should this "plebeian" body rashly decide to pass legislation unfavourable to the interests of this elite.

The Senate has never been an elected body. It has always been filled by patronage appointments of the ruling party in government. This has permitted Liberal and Conservative governments to establish control of the "upper chamber" as a means of controlling the legislative process. For example, the voluminous Senate appointments by the retiring Prime Minister Trudeau established a Liberal majority which has acted to frustrate the Mulroney Conservatives in government. Of course, Mulroney appointed his own cabal consisting of such Tory stalwarts as multi-millionaire



businessman Trevor Eyton and disgraced former Tory Premier of Nova Scotia, John Buchanan, in order to shift the balance to allow the Tories to pass their GST legislation.

In effect, the Senate Chamber has become an ancillary battleground of the two Big Business parties which, in addition to paying out public dollars for handsome salaries, exquisite pensions, and various commissions, duplicates the work of the House of Commons. In fact, the bodies are so intricately linked through party connections that there have been instances of Cabinet posts being occupied by unelected senators in governments that ostensibly are accountable to the people.

Now the talk is about an elected Senate. This has been raised not only by the Triple-E Tories but also by some prominent New Democrats. The unquestioned assumption in either case is that we need and can continue to afford a bicameral body. It seems strange that such an expense can be justified as we hear daily news of the shutdowns of retail and manufacturing operations and literally thousands of workers being cast into the scrapheap of unemployment and welfare. Our own Ontario NDP government is implementing cutbacks to hospitals and schools and yet there is talk of sustaining an upper body which duplicates the functions of the House of Commons, which most Canadians consider is working quite badly.

Can there be justification for the Senate on the grounds that it will give more equitable representation to the various regions of the country? Most Canadians find the idea of equal numbers of representatives for provinces like Ontario and Alberta or, say, Prince Edward Island as being an additional absurdity heaped on the current absurdity of what the Senate does. Should we be seduced by the notion that we could have a Senate which has equal representation by women and men? But equal representation for what?

In my view, if there was a case to be made for a renewed Senate, it would have to be fundamentally different from the current body in terms of giving adequate voice to those who are not currently served by the system and in terms of providing functions which are both independent of the Commons and functioning in a different and valuable way. For example, we might consider a Senate which is populated by the following groups in proportion to their representation to the Canadian population: women, First Nations, disabled persons, people of colour, gays and lesbians. The principle here would be to ensure social justice by effective representation. The choosing of such representatives ought to be done by democratically elected constituent assemblies in a manner to be determined by consultation with the relevant parties. The resulting Senate should have powers and responsibilities which are germane to achieving social equality. For example, legislative matters that concern the limitations or expansions of the rights of these groups should be subject to veto, amendment, ongoing scrutiny, and input by these groups.

Alternatively, we could fall back to the NDP/CCF's long-standing position about the Senate and call for its simple abolition. To address the issue of adequate and equitable representation, constitutional reform could take place in the shape of changing the way the House of Commons is elected. For example, instead of continuing with the current electoral boundaries, ridings could be made smaller so that more ridings would come into existence. This would mean that candidates for office would be running more affordable campaigns and would be much closer to the individual constituents. It would also allow for a new representation arrangement to fill the extra seats -- one in which guaranteed proportions of the above-mentioned underrepresented groups could be implemented.

In conclusion, we need to jettison the elitist Senate of the past and move towards a more representative democracy which reflects the needs of those who are currently disempowered and underrepresented by the priorities of Canada's capitalist governmental arrangements.

Investigate Police Chief McCormack

By Jeff Smith
Willowdale NDP

To Toronto Blacks, the acquittal of a Metro Police officer in the shooting of Lester Donaldson was one more slap in the face to a community that is increasingly regarding the Force and the politicians behind it with mistrust. While there have been numerous police shootings of Black citizens over the past decade, not one officer has faced charges.

So far, calls for an independent review board have been quashed by the pro-police forces on Metro Council including Metro Chairman Alan Tonks and Toronto Mayor June Rolands who ran on a "law and order" platform while making statements that many considered racist. At the heart of this controversy stands Police Chief William McCormack, who has whitewashed every police attack on the Black community.

However, his own conduct is coming under fire from the Black Action Defence Committee and lawyer Charles Roach along with a coalition of civil rights activists including the Law Union of Ontario, lawyers Clay Ruby and Paul Copeland and others. In May a submission was made to the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services calling for an investigation of the Police Chief. Among the allegations against McCormack are his encouraging officers to misuse powers of arrest; making secret deals with the Special Investigations Unit to limit its inquiries and give the Force's own investigators priority; and his failure to enforce provincial regulations regarding officers' use of firearms.

These questions bring to light the extent to which the authorities will go to ensure that the police force remains free from public input and criticism. If the Metro Police Force and indeed any police force is to receive trust, it must prove itself by allowing access and criticism. Copies of the brief can be obtained and declarations of support sent to Roach, Schwartz & Assoc., 688 St.Clair Ave. Toronto M6C 1B1.

The Textbook and the Gun

By Lennox Farrell

Lennox is a well-known educator and leader in Toronto's Black community and is on the provincial executive of the ONDP.

THE NUMBER OF KILLINGS of Black youth by other Black youth over the last two years is greater than similar killings in any other two-year period in Toronto. In addition, the number of Black people shot by the police forces in the last two years is also greater than shootings in any other previous two-year period.

Is the level of violence by some Black youth a harbinger of the number of chickens that are coming home to roost? Is it also true that institutions here have sown the wind, but that it is mostly some Black youth who are reaping the whirlwind? Has the Black community been inactive in defense of these youth?

In response to this last question? Hardly!

During the last two decades, which include the years when this increased number of killings occurred, people in the Black community again took up the struggle around the issue of the mis-education of Black children. These people followed on the work done in the fifties and sixties by other Black people, who had themselves followed in the footsteps of people who had worked on this question in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

Seminal organizations involved in this work include those like the Black Education Project (BEP) in the 1960s and 1970s, the Organization of Parents of Black Children (OPBC), the North York Black Education Committee (NYBEC), and the Scarborough Black Education Committee (SBEC). This list is incomplete, the limit set only by my faulty memory.

Along with the work done by these committees was the untiring work by a host of other people, like Ron Blake with **Higher Marks** and Hilroy Thomas with **Centre for Achievement**.

It must be kept in mind that almost all of this work was done on a volunteer basis by a community already lacking in resources. Notwithstanding, the work required enormous amounts of time, skills and commitment in preparation, in organizing, in meetings in the community, as well as meetings with Principals, with Guidance Counsellors, with Trustees, with Directors of Boards of Education, with Ministers of Education--all of whom were meanwhile being paid--to try to convince them of the ill effects that their policies were having on these Black youth.

These policies included the iniquitous practice of streaming Black youth into low-level Basic programs. These soulless programs destroyed the self-confidence, self-reliance and self-respect of these youth, and with predictable consequences.

Today, the claim is being made that these youth are "young, gun-totin' and Black." This claim is incorrect in that it unfairly targets all Black youth. It is correct, though, in regards to the fact that many Black youth are seriously injuring and killing each other. The use of, but more so the business, in illicit drugs is a big contributor to this violent, anti-social behaviour.

The challenge, though, is to understand how these Black youth react to the crises affecting them--crises created by systemic forms of discrimination. These youth must be understood in the context of people who have been rejected. They must be understood from the perspectives of those forced to accept conditions of reduced options. Declining expectations that society has of them and that they have of themselves leave them politically impotent. They feel that what they say, that who they are, does not matter. Experiences with powerful institutions outside the community, like the school and the police, leave them vulnerable. Experiences with institutions inside the community, like the church, leave them alienated from their own history and culture.

In this state, while they lash out at society, their most vicious blows are aimed mostly at each other. It is instructive that they kill each other for a dime. It is the loss of value of self forced on them, and which they subsequently accept.

The institution that begins their descent into Hell is the school. This is most ironic. Education was denied our foreparents, and one of the conditions that most marked the destruction of slavery was their newly-won right to education. For example, one of the poignant scenes that emerged from the 1860's American Civil War was a photograph of ex-slaves who, as soldiers in the anti-slavery Union army, posed with their guns in one hand and their new schoolbooks in the other. One was the symbol of what they were prepared to pay and to exact as the price for freedom; the other was the key to protecting this freedom.

Today, the gun is one of the symbols of our communities in North America. The violence it represents is the violence of being denied, of being rejected, of being alienated, and the hopelessness these breed. This argument is difficult for some parents to accept. Some of them will point out that we adults grew up in conditions that materially were much poorer than our youth know today. We knew what it was to go without shoes, pants and textbooks, yet still do well in school. We may have lacked opportunities for education, but we had the will to learn.

This will to learn was guaranteed by the fact that we were taught by people who, in addition to being teachers, were also role models. We didn't know it then, but they were the reason why our horizons were unlimited. We could be plumbers, lawyers, teachers, doctors, carpenters, mechanics. Our youth, conversely, now have opportunities to learn, but lack the will to do so. Compared to what was not available to their parents, the book may now be easier to get. For them, though, it is the gun that is now easier to use. And the cause for this? In the education matrix, the element with the greatest single impact on student development, or retardation, is the quality of the teacher.

It was, then, a prescient Black community that tried in vain to save these youth. As volunteers, we have worked harder on the education of our children than the officials trained and paid to do this. It is time that we take over this responsibility and accomplish where others have so miserably failed. It has also been a prescient few in this Black community who have said that the comprehensive turnaround in our children's lives will begin only when we have control of a number of institutions like schools.

This family of schools must include a Secondary school, with its satellites of Primary, Elementary or Grade schools as feeders into it--all under the control of a curricula set by, and administered by, Black teachers as the majority of the staff.

This idea will be resisted by people in and out of the Black community. Some Black parents who oppose it are oblivious to the fact that they quite comfortably attend Black churches. Some other educators who oppose it have no difficulty in accepting Jewish, Chinese and other such schools. All would agree that the efforts of the past have been failures, efforts in which the education of most Black children was entrusted to a white establishment. This establishment would hesitate and actively resist this type of recommend-ation, in the same way and possibly for the same reasons that a Black-owned radio station has been denied. If we fail in this, what will surely increase will not be the number of Black graduates, but the number of Blacks killed by the trade in KKKrack cocaine.

Health Care Reform Threatens Women

By Lois Bédard
(High Park-Swansea)

During both World War I and World War II women in Canada entered into the paid work force in large numbers. In each case, after the armistice, women were forced back into the home and out of paid employment. After all, women have always served as a pool of surplus labour in capitalist society, but our primary function has always remained that of unpaid domestic labour designed to reproduce and nurture the new generation and to restore the tired workman to the daily workforce fed, clothed and ready to produce.

Subsidies for daycare ended in 1946. The only personal discretionary financial funds in the hands of the women in the home was the Childcare Allowance cheque addressed to her personally to her home. That small progressive recognition has now been withdrawn by the present Tory government. Daycare is being dismantled and the National Daycare Program summarily discarded.

But the cutbacks to daycare funding are but one part of a much broader agenda and larger assault on women's gains. The aim is to pass off onto the family, and specifically women, the costs and responsibility of those social services which our various levels of government have provided to one degree or another until now and which they are now eliminating or curtailing.

In this planned recessionary period of high unemployment the majority of jobs available are low paid, non-union, service-oriented jobs in lieu of unionized, full-time, manufacturing work. The two-waged family is suffering a major drop in income. All the while, it remains saddled with long-term locked-in high-cost mortgages, escalating tuition fees for post-secondary education, along with rising municipal taxes forced on it by the Tories' unilateral withdrawal from negotiated shared tax transfers. The family is further stressed by the daily application of the GST and PST on basic needs. This distressed economic unit--the family--faces plant closures and job losses, limited severance pay, and decreased unemployment insurance.

Against this bleak economic backdrop, we are hearing more and more--in the media, in advertising, in our educational institutions, from the pulpit and from the political podium--the message that women's first place is in the home, even if they happen to have to work. We are told women need to spend more time with their children, instead of expecting daycare which is looked on as inadequate at best and harmful at worst. Mothers, we hear, ought to assume more responsibility for their kids' education, instead of leaving it to teachers and the schools, which are being attacked more and more as incompetent.

Now, on top of all this, comes the restructuring of our health care system. But what will these "reforms" really mean? What will be their actual effect?

Who is going to provide the care for the de-institutionalized relative in chronic care or a seniors' nursing home? The family. Where are the ill and elderly relatives going to get the assistance they need? In the home. And who is going to provide this paraprofessional service? The female members of the family, of course.

Why is this happening?

Health care costs in Ontario are rising faster than the amount of tax dollars allocated to pay the bill. One solution is to increase the pool of tax dollars by taxing profitable corporations and banks that are not currently taxed or that are undertaxed. Another solution is to decrease health costs.

Where are costs most amenable to redirection or reduction? Can we show statistically where the tax dollars for health care are disproportionately allocated? Having so determined, can we institute reforms to control costs?

The ONDP is continuing to examine community-based alternatives to institutional health care originally proposed by the previous Liberal government. But is it wise to now be closing down existing institutions while we are still only examining the delivery of community health care alternatives? Closing down overburdened health care facilities while other services are not yet in place will only lead to the privatization of health institutions and eliminate their co-ordinated integration under OHIP.

If there are now insufficient nursing home bes and chronic care beds available to meet the current needs, how are we going to care for the growing number of elderly citizens many of whom will be ill or debilitated. In family homes?

In today's cities family homes are not built to accommodate both the nuclear family and the disabled or ill relatives. The city home usually can't care for the wandering Alzheimer sister. The uncle recovering in a wheelchair from heart surgery can't be physically provided for in a town-house or crowded apartment.

And again, who is expected to be the care giver? Most families have both parents working to try to meet the costs of housing, feeding, clothing, and nourishing the existing family unit. Many other households are managed by single parents--mostly women--who are often out of the home during the working day. Are the costs and efforts of caring for the ill and the elderly to be simply added on to women's already starved resources?

Visiting public health nurses and itinerant home-care helpers may provide some services, but who will provide the regular routines of shopping, meal preparation, laundry, mending etc.? Do we assume that women now employed in nursing homes and chronic care hospitals will provide the necessary attendant services in the community without a fee for service? During the current capitalist downturn, do we assume that skilled women and men will give up paid employment when their labour is needed at home to nurture the extended family? And if and when the economy rebounds, who will replace these unpaid home-care workers when they are called to re-enter the gainfully employed sector?

Men and women want to live up to their full potential. In the 21st Century women want to share in the joys and pleasures of a full life knowing that their loved ones are properly cared for in appropriate surroundings.

Before any institutions are taken out from under the public service umbrella, we need to have on stream appropriate community health services with designated staff and resources. Nor can such important and fundamental change be successfully carried through by bureaucratic fiat. Such a transition requires that each community work with representatives of the community's various clients, with the wide range of paraprofessionals, as well as with all health professionals in the institutions and in the community to plan out its implementation. Appropriate timetables need to be set up to prepare for a smooth transition before any institutions are fundamentally altered.

Without such a careful and collective method of transforming health care in this province, the current reforms will result in just one more burden on our overextended families. And they risk reinforcing the trend to unload the state's social responsibilities--childcare, education, and health--back onto women's shoulders.

Remember Socialism?

The following article, slightly edited, was circulated by the Left Caucus to an emergency meeting of the Provincial Council held on May 23. The meeting was called to discuss the party caucus's attempts to reverse party policy on common pause day legislation. Council delegates voted by a 9-to-1 margin to uphold the existing party policy.

An emergency Provincial Council meeting has been called to deal with the issue of a common pause day. The fundamental issues involved in this discussion go beyond the merits of Sunday shopping. Many members and supporters of the Ontario New Democratic Party are concerned that no part of our program is immune in the quest to appease big business interests.

What will our counsel be sought on? Will it be sought on the burgeoning economic crisis that free trade has created? Will it be sought on how best to halt the decay of our failing social system? Will it be sought on how best to overcome the crushing weight of poverty that has forced tens of thousands of women, youth and jobless to go on welfare or line up in a degrading ritual at foodbanks?

Not a single one of these burning issues will be open for discussion and input from the membership this weekend. Instead we are going to be consulted on...Sunday shopping!

A reversal of our recent legislation on Sunday shopping is unlikely either to revive the economy or please the insatiable business interests. A retreat from the implemented legislation would likely reinforce the perception that we are being buffeted around without a rudder, alienate retail workers and others who may be victimized by Sunday openings, and undermine our support in important sectors of the labour movement. Giving into business on the issue will be only one more step in our abandonment of the principles of solidarity and collective values. This is especially so now in light of the leadership's endorsement of casino socialism in spite of Bob Rae's own stirring condemnation in 1990 of casinos as playing "on greed, the sense of the ultimate chance, the hope against hope that the spin of the wheel or the shoot of the dice will produce instant wealth, instant power, instant gratification." Have we accommodated business interests to such an extent that we are now prepared to make profits from the misery of other people, forgetting the sense of human togetherness that is fundamental to our socialist vision?

Accountable leadership needed

Yet, the critical issues that demand consultation are still being handled at the highest level of government without input from the membership. Who consulted us in deciding that the recent budget should penalize many pensioners by imposing some $700 more in taxes than on people under 65 years of age? Who decided that 2,500 civil servants would be pink-slipped by the government this year? Who consulted us when the NDP decided to sacrifice medical, educational and social services on the alter of a balanced budget?

Accountability--on all issues--is critical to our success as a party, as a social movement and, yes, as a government. Without regularly maintaining contact with and developing lines of communication with our ridings, party activists, social movements, trade unionists, women, community activists and others who form the backbone and line of defence of our party, we will drift aimlessly, out of touch with reality.

Let's not forget how we got elected. We were catapulted into power on a wave of social reform by an electorate tired of the machinations of the old parties and their cosy relationship with the development industry. Working people wanted a party they could trust, a party that they could believe in, a party that was different, a party that would defend them in the looming economic crisis. Their hopes were raised, their expectations heightened.

Government's initial stance

Nobody expected everything overnight. It was widely appreciated that Ontario suffered disproportionately from the restructuring of global capital investments. Neo-liberal trade policies resulted in the loss of 300,000 high-paid, skilled union jobs, many of them in viable plants. A decline in the provincial tax base, a ballooning of the numbers on welfare and other social service assistance, and a sharp decline in consumer spending have drained the public coffers.

Our government's initial reaction was commendable. Notwithstanding an aggressive media campaign of slander promoted by business interests, including mobilizations at Queen's Park, we stuck to our guns. Our 1991 budget marked the high point in the NDP's term of office. We stood our ground, and even recouped our support among our natural constituents with a budget that said no to cutbacks and no to dismissal of civil servants.

But then something happened. It seemed that the government felt it had gone as far as it needed to maintain its credibility. Or else, the massive campaign by big business to undermine confidence in the NDP government finally had its impact.

Government turns tail

Whatever the cause, having taken a clear and principled stand, the leadership of the party then failed to carry through on any of our other substantial promises. Student fees were hiked within days after our last convention called for a tuition freeze. An independent civilian review board, which was promoted during the campaign to deal with police abuse, was never heard of again. Wheelchair accessible buses for disabled people to get to and from work (needed more during a recession than ever) were shelved. Consumers Gas was sold to a foreign corporation in the face of an ONDP Convention resolution calling for its public ownership. The Ontario Federation of Labour criticized the NDP leadership's decision to permit off-premises scab labour during strikes in the proposed **Ontario Labour Relations Act** at its last convention. Next, the abandonment of public auto insurance, and the gratuitous promise that it would not be reintroduced again during this term of office, struck a major blow that left us vulnerable to charges of opportunism and resulted in a public perception that we were not to be trusted. The current budget has put us in the untenable position of supervising cutbacks in social services, civil service layoffs and even legalizing casinos and other forms of gambling. Major retailers have now been given a moral argument to pressure the government to retreat on its common pause day legislation.

Repeated concessions to clearly implacable big business interests have failed to produce results. We no longer appear to be in the driver's seat. We appear to have no strategic points for framing our legislative programs. Our distinct image is blurred. Innocent errors committed by cabinet members have put us on the defensive. Our government's effort to compensate for our retreats by emphasizing our pristine honesty has predictably backfired. The result has been an isolated government, a reticent membership, a hostile media and a confused electorate.

The situation is now critical. Are we going to mobilize our broad social base and our overwhelming parliamentary majority to govern. Or will we go on making concession after concession to big business whose demands only multiply with each concession made? Will the NDP move forward to a vision of democratic socialism? Or will it accept the existing economic chaos as an inevitable framework and let business rule by proxy?

These questions are not academic. NDP Premier Bob Rae told the Canadian Chamber of Commerce during his seven-day trip to the Far East this month that "Free Trade is here to stay and Canadians might as well get used to it." Reporting in the May 16 *Toronto Star*, Thomas Walkom quotes Rae as saying that "Ontarians should think positively, that the economy isn't as it seems."

An alternative to chaos

Yet there is a choice, a path that leads us back to the future, which reunites us with our roots and synthesizes a perspective that can inspire the membership and win back the electorate.

The chaos in our economy is not inevitable. Our current economic crisis

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Plan for Human Need

from page 2

hazard and chaotic destruction of our economy by market forces can be lessened immeasurably if not entirely eradicated. Such a vision, however, has become the burning necessity of the moment as the market forces devastate entire regions of our province. Such a plan need be neither bureaucratic nor over-centralized. Those sectors of the economy which may require public ownership could be administered collectively by the work force involved in production in concert with the community at large and with representatives from the government.

The current economic situation confronting Ontarians reflects a serious malaise that is unlikely to recede in the foreseeable future. Our government was elected with a mandate to take whatever measures are necessary to protect the interests of working people and their allies. Our current actions do not accord with these aspirations. Far less does the lack of clear direction exemplified by our promotion of casino gambling advance efforts to build a society where "equality, solidarity and cooperation replace ruthless acquisitiveness, inequality and greed." (Bob Rae, *What We Owe Each Other*, September 1990).

The vision of a planned democratic economy in which social priorities determine what is produced has always inspired the NDP and the CCF before it. Such a vision, however, has become the burning necessity of the moment as market forces take their toll on our province. Unless we take the first step to institute a plan to overcome the chaos of capitalism and regain the confidence of disaffected voters, the current government will be a one-term wonder, missing an historic opportunity to consolidate its base and take initiatives planned to meet human need instead of human greed.

It is this vision and this understanding that continues to motivate the Left Caucus.

THE following letter by Mary Boyce, of St. Andrew-St. Patrick Riding, was originally meant for the editor of the Ontario Democrat. But since it doesn't publish letters, we decided to run it--for Mary's and the party's benefit. Maybe this will be the start of a regular column (and a beautiful relationship): "Unpublished letters to the Ontario Democrat."

Dear Editor:

It's a good thing we have so many "Ontarians"--people who gave $1,000 or more "annually" (i.e., in 1991)--because it must have cost a lot to print that page of the Ontario Democrat listing them all. If there's money left over, maybe you'd print other lists.

How about a list of people who just manage to scrape up the basic membership fee? We used to give the sales pitch about the fee equalling only a couple of cases of beer. These days, a couple of cases might be the whole year's supply. And what with other vices (the theatre, pizzas with the works, etc.) totally out of reach, membership can be a hard sell.

Or you could do a list of those people who always answer the call to stuff envelopes, run errands and make up quorums at meetings to draft constitutions. Granted, most of them lack ambition, they haven't clued into portable phones, and getting a lift in their cars means you have to squeeze in among the sign stakes (three years after an election) and the riding's coffee urn.

I appreciate that putting together these lists won't be easy. It would daunt any editor to track down all the members who put in, say, 100 hours of volunteer work for the Party in a year, and the ones who've given up vices often won't admit it. They can't be found just by running a computer search or reading souvenir menus.

If you ask around and use informants, I know **you can do it!** In fact, I bet you'll find so many names that you'd have to print them in small type. I think, though, that in this recession or whatever it is, they'd understand.

With lists at the ready, I remain, etc.

Mary Boyce

Chaos not Inevitable

from page 7

shows that capitalism is incapable of balancing supply and demand, capacity and need, human ingenuity and social priority on its own, any more than Stalinism could. The haphazard and chaotic destruction of our economy by "free" market forces has resulted in massive unemployment, wasted resources, deepening divisions on the basis of sex, race and class, and devastation to our environment. The market has proven to be a barrier not only to fulfilling human needs, but ultimately to human existence. As a report released by the Canadian Mental Health Association pointed out this month, "As the jobless rate increases, so does the rate of depression, anxiety, self-deprecation, fatalism, anger, spouse abuse, suicide, homicide, sexual assault, property crimes, divorce and alcoholism."

To replace this dead end chaos, we need a democratically determined economic plan with socially determined priorities, where workers, communities and government can jointly manage the economy. This can only be realized on the most thoroughgoing democratic basis. This means community control over our neighbourhoods and our local institutions. It means workers control and self-management at the workplace, coordinated through elected representatives at the local, regional and national levels of every industry and sector. And it means ongoing citizens' control over their elected government representatives. We need a strategic vision of a planned economy in which each sector is integrated with each other and through which the working people of Ontario will control their economic fate. By planning production for use and not for profit, we can harness the energy of society to benefit all.

It is thus that we can reassert a clarity of vision and commitment to principle and struggle that has won the NDP, and before it, the CCF, respect over several decades among working people. J.S. Woodsworth, William Irvine, Colin Cameron, Agnes McPhail and Tommy Douglas never lost sight of the prize and inspired hundreds of thousands with the power of a vision of socialist democracy without a casino in sight. Such a vision takes us beyond a strategy to achieve the Utopian dream of appeasing big business which will never support us no matter how deep the shade of blue of Floyd Laughren's business suit.

Let us begin now to govern with the confidence of our overwhelming majority. Let us begin now to mobilize our base to implement our program. Let us begin now to carry through the reforms that we have fought for over the decades, and at the same time, begin as part of our vision of an alternative society, to begin to take the first steps to implement plans and policies designed to establish a socialist democracy in which industry is run for the benefit of all, production takes place for use, and human need is the guiding measure for enterprise. Let us stand up to the mega-corporations who plunder our wealth for their profit. Let us not abandon our soul as a movement for social change to appease business with a few more shekels.

If the electorate wanted a Conservative Party, they would have elected one. Do we want to face the electorate less than three years from now with our natural base confused, our membership demoralized, and our image as an accountable party in tatters? Or is it better to be what we are, to be proud of it and to go about and get the job done?

Tony Benn on British Labour Party Defeat

Tony Benn, MP for Chesterfield, is the longest serving Labour member and the unofficial leader of the British Labour Party's left wing. We reprint this article from the April 20, 1992, issue of *The Guardian*

THERE is one reason for Labour's defeat in the general election which has not been mentioned at all: that the party did not offer the electors a radical, credible and democratic alternative vision of the sort of society which it wished to create here and worldwide, and hence was unable to inspire the support it needed to win.

It is no use blaming the media, the pollsters or the image makers, for they were all responding, in their own way, to their clear and accurate perception that Labour had consciously decided to limit its appeal to those who wished to see the political, economic and social status quo better managed, but not fundamentally altered.

In short it had been decided, at the top, that the main features of the Thatcherite counter-revolution were to be accepted as irreversible, and the attack concentrated on the Tory leadership.

That managerial and highly personalised strategy was supported by a clear majority of the national executive, the Shadow Cabinet, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the leaders of the trade union movement.

False hope

The party, as a whole, which desperately wanted to win, went along with this, out of loyalty to the leader, a desire not to rock the boat and in the false hope that it could make itself acceptable to the newspaper proprietors and the establishment by isolating, marginalising and sometimes expelling socialists and repudiating socialist ideas.

For the same reason the party leadership distanced itself from all the battles for social justice that were forced on the trade unions, local councils, anti-poll tax campaigners and even those who opposed the Gulf war.

All this was done in the name of "living in the real world," "facing the harsh realities," "modernising our image," and those within the party who did try to look at the real world and argue for radical change were derided as "old-fashioned."

In truth our policy reviews, hailed as examples of "new thinking," were merely a reversion to those adopted by the previous, and defeated, Labour government -- support for market forces, legal restraints on labour, a federalised capitalist Europe, nuclear weapons and continuation of the war in Ireland.

Despite our fourth defeat we are still being told that "the new-look Labour Party" has become "electable" and the endorsement of the Financial Times, or praise for our election TV spectaculars, seem to be more highly prized than the votes of our natural constituents.

And how ironic that the bitter attacks of the leadership against the left -- with full media support -- were followed up during the election, by the very same sort of attacks, but this time on the leadership by the same media, using almost the same language. It is necessary to remind ourselves of this if we are to see through the trendy nonsense now being peddled around that the only way to win is by stitching up a deal with the Liberals, in a pact or coalition or by a change in the electoral system. A Labour Party that broke the organic links with the unions and abandoned socialism would go the way of the Social Democratic Party.

Capitalism in crisis

If Labour is to win majority support we must be ready to face the fact that, after the collapse of communism, it is the capitalist world which is now in difficulty and this is inflicting hardship on millions of people and could possibly lead to a sharper swing to the right, as happened in the thirties.

It is capitalism, and its rotten values, that has led British industry into decline, pushed up unemployment, created poverty and homelessness, cut essential public services, neglected our infrastructures and the environment and has incited the assault on democracy and civil liberties.

The war in Ireland goes on relentlessly. Scotland is, rightly, demanding a greater say in its own future. The European community is in trouble, as are America and Japan. An authoritarian Yeltsin is importing hardship on Russia. The Third World is being ruthlessly exploited and rigidly controlled by America, through a passive UN in the name of a "new world order" specially designed to maintain US hegemony by force of arms, in pursuit of its global economic interests.

People everywhere want good jobs, good homes, health care and schools, dignity in retirement and a measure of security within a settled community, and those aspirations are certainly not being met in today's Britain nor can they be with the present maldistribution of economic and political power.

No serious socialist in the Labour Party, with its deep roots in Christian ethics, cooperative experience, solidarity, dissenting radicalism and Marxist humanism has ever argued for the rigid imposition of state control, for our whole history has been a struggle to disseminate power by establishing and extending political and economic democracy.

Capitalism, communism, liberalism and labourism have one thing in common: few of those whose power and status derives from their control of these systems have ever really wanted to see ordinary people gain effective democratic control over their organisations, or run the industries in which they work, or the communities in which they live.

This century has witnessed an immense increase in technological power, as the human race has re-equipped itself with a completely new set of tools. Most of that power, in all societies, has been centralised in the hands of very few people who have exercised it with consummate skill, and some ruthlessness, in pursuit of their own narrow interests.

True community needed

This is the real challenge facing socialists. And our powers of analysts, our moral values and our international prospective must be brought to bear on the problems facing the world where the gap between rich and poor in terms of power, as well as wealth, is forever widening and could end in an environmental and human catastrophe for the planet. Until socialists are prepared to reject this jungle in favour of the creation of a real community and address these urgent democratic issues, we cannot hope to win the support and inspire the confidence of the younger generation.

No wonder many people have become cynical at the endlessly stage-managed confrontations between politicians, when they know that the Home of Commons is fast becoming an important forum in a one-party state.

This is no time for Labour to be seeking scapegoats for what has happened, for rehashing ancient sectarian arguments, or for instant labelling of everyone who speaks out. What is really needed now is time for reflection and discussion, unhappily made much more difficult by the rushed leadership election which has been specifically designed and timetabled to prevent such discussion from taking place and to exclude any candidate who might offer a real choice.

It is far too early to begin drafting Labour's 1997 manifesto which must necessarily be quite specific about the policies which we would be recommending.

Socialists must have the courage to address the most pressing problems that face humanity, win back the right to think for ourselves and speak our minds honestly, not least inside the Labour Party, and to demand democratic rights for working people, so that they can take charge of their own destiny and use those rights to improve the quality of their lives.

All this amounts to a demand for fundamental reform. Nothing short of a democratic revolution, carried through after full debate and with popular participation and consent, will see us through the period of history which lies ahead when social unrest, here and abroad, will be certain to rise sharply, made worse by the crisis of representation in our seriously flawed economic, social and political institutions.

This is the real political agenda for socialists in the nineties and beyond, and it would attract strong support.

Muni Taub

In December of last year Muni Taub, a long-time participant in the Left Caucus, well respected by everyone who knew him, died suddenly at the age of 82. The following has been excerpted from the eulogy given by Maxine Hermolin of the United Jewish People's Order at his funeral.

Muni filled his life with ideals and goals for which he strove tirelessly. Neither age nor illness daunted him. He had a vision to make the world better--and he did.

He began life in Poland as the youngest of four children. World War I shattered his family. His father was somewhere in far-away Canada. His mother succumbed to tuberculosis. Muni, his sister and brothers, were sheltered and raised by their uncles and aunts during the war years in Ukraine. Later, fleeing a pogrom, Muni and his brother Harold hid under a bench where a soldier plunged his weapon through the slats, wounding them and leaving them for dead. Miraculously, they survived and were found by their one surviving aunt.

The four frightened children set off to find their father in Montreal. As refugees they were persecuted and robbed. Their journey took two years, but in 1921 they finally arrived in Montreal and were reunited with their father.

After graduating from the Jewish Folk Shula in Montreal, Muni taught in a Jewish school in New Jersey for a time. On returning to Montreal, he worked in a dress factory and managed the Jewish Left Press. During WWII, from 1940 to 1942, Muni was interned in Petawawa, along with a spectrum of people from across Canada accused of, but not necessarily involved in, left-wing activities.

On his release, Muni went to Winnipeg to work and was soon asked to organize for the Fur and Leather Workers Union. His wife, son and little daughter Esther joined him in Winnipeg where they lived almost 10 years. Returning to Toronto, Muni worked briefly as a union organizer and then got a job selling lumber to builders. He continued working until his 80th year, acquiring expertise in the construction industry.

Politics were integral to his life. He never swayed from his principles of social democracy. He was active in the NDP for many years. He was part of the generation that struggled to achieve family allow-ances, unemployment insurance, medicare and old age pensions. He worked in the anti-war committee and left caucus. He never missed a peace march. He campaigned for Dan Heap and Zanana Akande among others. He felt great satisfaction in living to see the NDP elected in Ontario, and re-elected in Saskatchewan and BC. During the Gulf War, he initiated a panel discussion on the war from a left-wing Jewish perspective.

He was a driving force in the United Jewish People's Order. UJPO's philosophy is rooted in humanism and it celebrates the richness of secular Jewish culture. It speaks out against injustice, intolerance and inequality and for peace. Muni served on national and local boards; he translated articles for UJPO's publication and initiated lectures, panels and debates on the Middle East, the Soviet Union, etc.

He had a passion for the Yiddish language (his mother tongue) and vast knowledge of Jewish history and literature. He avidly supported the progressive Yiddish press, writing many articles and letters to the editor.

He was a doer, with boundless energy, impatient for action and persevering. He was intelligent and analytical, principled and compassionate. He was outspoken and at the same time humble and gentle. He was as *mensch*. He enriched the lives of all who knew him and of our social democratic movement.

Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton, an active member in the NDP and Left Caucus, was found dead in his Scarborough apartment on July 9 of last year. Bill will be remembered for his staunch dedication to the socialist cause.

An avid student of jazz, literature, philosophy and politics, Bill found his calling in working with young people who ended up on the wrong side of the tracks and often the wrong side of the law. His profound humanitarianism led him into criminology, a field in which he worked, not to condemn, but to do everything in his power to restore these people's self-respect--a task that often put him at odds with his superiors.

In 1985, Bill joined the NDP and subsequently the Left Caucus where he honed his political ideas in the hopes of advancing the party and the position of the working class, both of which he was proud to be a member. As many of us were well aware, he was strongly adamant in his views, but no matter how heated a discussion would become, he would eventually reconcile in the spirit of friendship and common cause.

His extensive knowledge of world events and his ability to retain some of the most obscure facts made him an invaluable resource. He would often take time out and hop on the subway to lend a friend a book or an article, or just to share a scotch or some laughs. His respect for friends and strangers alike was ardent as was his hatred for social injustice.

His commitments to socialism and to his friends will be missed by those of us who have had the chance to work with and to know him.

Make RU-486 Available in Canada

Despite ever-increasing attacks by rightwing "pro-Life" forces, the Canadian pro-choice movement has succeeded in keeping abortion out of the Criminal Code, keeping abortion clinics running, and otherwise defending women's right to control their bodies. While we need to maintain surgical abortion available to women, medical science will inevitably develop other means for women to control their reproduction. One such advance is the drug RU486, which has been available in Europe but has thus far been kept out of North America.

In support of the campaign to make RU 486 available in Canada, the Left Caucus is reprinting the following information.

What is RU 486?

RU 486 (or Mifepristone) is a steroid hormone similar in structure to the natural hormone progesterone. Invented in 1980 by Dr. Etienne-Emile Baulieu for the French pharmaceutical company Roussel-Uclaf, RU 486 is the first of a new generation of birth control drugs called "antiprogestins", considered to be a breakthrough to birth control technology.

How does RU 486 work?

In a woman's body, the natural hormone known as progesterone is essential for establishing and maintaining a pregnancy. RU 486 is a progesterone antagonist (an "antiprogestin").

Will RU 486 completely replace surgical abortion?

No. The RU 486 regime works only during the first 9 weeks of pregnancy, or up to 63 days from the start of the woman's last menstrual period. After this time, the woman's own progesterone level is apparently too great to be affected by the drug.

What is the background of RU 486?

Early trials found that RU 486, when taken alone, acted very slowly and had a significant failure rate. In order to improve its effectiveness, Roussel's investigators began to combine RU 486 with a follow-up dose of prostaglandin. (Prostaglandins have been widely used since 1970 to induce uterine contractions.) The improvement was dramatic; prostaglandins were found to complement the actions of RU 486.

Over the last decade, dozens of clinical studies on RU 486 have been conducted with thousands of women in over 20 countries, including France, Britain, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the U.S., Scandinavia, and the former Soviet Union. To date, RU 486 has been used by over 100,000 women in Europe alone.

Where is RU 486 being used today?

RU 486 in combination with a prostaglandin has been widely used in France since 1989 for pregnancies up to 7 weeks, and now accounts for one in three French abortions. In 1991, RU 486 was approved for use in Britain for pregnancies up to 9 weeks duration. Sweden was the next country to be licensed to market the drug and negotiations are in progress for the other Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands. The Chinese are now using RU 486 (in possible breach of the patent), and their numbers are not included in the research totals.

Pressure from the anti-choice movement has succeeded in keeping RU 486 out of the United States for the foreseeable future. Roussel-Uclaf has been much criticized for its timidity in not encouraging the development of RU 486 for use there or elsewhere.

RU 486 IS NOT AVAILABLE IN CANADA.

What if RU 486 is made available in Canada?

RU 486 is effective during the first 9 weeks of pregnancy. Over 35,000 Canadian women a year have abortions during the first 9 weeks or half of all women having abortions. If RU 486 is made available in Canada, it could benefit thousands of women every year.

Is RU 486 a "do-it-yourself" abortion pill?

No. At the present time, an RU 486/prostaglandin abortion is a three or four step regimen performed under close medical supervision at specifically authorized medical centres. Further trials may result in the simplification of this process, but a certain degree of medical supervision will remain necessary.

How is RU 486 administered?

A woman must visit an approved clinic for a physical examination and pregnancy test. Her medical history is screened to determine if there is any reason why the drug should not be used in her case. (In those countries with laws which stipulate a waiting period for abortion, a woman must leave the centre and return after the waiting period has expired.)

At this point she is given RU 486 in tablet form (usually three pills of 200 mg. each) and swallows them in the presence of a nurse or doctor before leaving the clinic. (Most women begin to bleed the day after taking RU 486.)

The woman must return to the clinic after 48 hours to receive the prostaglandin which will complete the abortion. (In the future it may become possible to avoid this separate clinic visit to administer the prostaglandin.) The woman stays at the clinic for the next 4 to 6 hours. Most (up to 90%) abort there; the rest will abort later at home.

The woman must return several days later for a physicians's examination to make sure the abortion is complete and to determine if she has experienced any side effects. Bleeding, similar to a heavy period, usually lasts from 7 to 12 days.

What are the side effects of RU 486?

Common side effects include bleeding, abdominal pain and cramping and possibly some nausea, vomiting or diarrhea from the prostaglandin. (New trials using the prostaglandin Cytotec have resulted in a significant reduction in these side effects.)

Studies have found that blood loss and pain from an RU 486 abortion are no greater than from a surgical abortion. Woman needing painkillers are given analgesics. About one percent of women who take the drug combination experience heavy bleeding which requires further treatment.

Clinical studies on RU 486 revealed that incomplete abortion occurred in 2-3% of cases and that pregnancy persisted in 1%. These women then required surgical abortions.

How effective is RU 486?

RU 486, in conjunction with a prostaglandin, is 96% effective in inducing abortion during the first 9 weeks of pregnancy.

How safe is RU 486?

Studies so far show RU 486/prostaglandin abortions to be safe, with a low of number of complications. Taking into account the numbers of women who have used the regimen, the rate of adverse occurrences is low compared to other drugs or medical procedures.

What about long-term health risks?

Extensive clinical tests since 1982 have not revealed

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Support Abortion Pill Campaign

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any evidence of long-term health effects on women who use RU 486, and such effects appear unlikely given the very short time women are exposed to the drug.

What are the disadvantages of RU 486?

RU 486 is only effective during the earliest weeks of pregnancy, a time when many women do not yet know they are pregnant.

RU 486 takes longer than a surgical abortion. A vacuum aspiration abortion is done in 15 minutes, whereas RU 486 takes two days or more and, at present, requires two trips to the clinic for the abortion itself.

As a relatively new procedure, the long-term safety of RU 486 cannot yet be confirmed.

What are the advantages of RU 486?

RU 486 can be administered to a woman as soon as she knows that she is pregnant and wants to have an abortion. By contrast, a woman must wait until the 6th-8th week before she is able to have a vacuum aspiration abortion.

Pregnancy termination with RU 486 is non-surgical, requires no anesthesia and puts women at no risk of perforation, damage to the cervix or infection from instruments.

Most women prefer RU 486 because it allows them greater psychological control over the termination of pregnancy.

RU 486 can make abortion a more private experience. Women are usually alone when they abort.

RU 486 has the potential to make abortion more accessible. Administering it does not require the same level of specialized medical expertise or time as surgical abortion. Furthermore, RU 486 should eventually be cheaper than a surgical abortion.

RU 486 has tremendous potential for use in developing countries where hundreds of thousands of women each year are injured or die from unsafe abortions.

How has the medical science community reacted to RU 486?

The international medical science community has formally recognized the importance of RU 486 and supported its testing. Dr. Etienne-Emile Baulieu won the coveted Lasker Prize in 1989 for discovering RU 486.

How have anti-abortion groups reacted to RU 486?

Not surprisingly, the anti-choice lobby has reacted strongly against RU 486, and has been effective in curtailing its availability even for medical research into the drug's other applications. Opponents of abortion have threatened boycotts against Roussel and its German parent company, Hoechst A.G., as well as against any pharmaceutical company which would seek to license RU 486. In October 1988, after some company employees had received death threats, Roussel abruptly withdrew the new drug from the market in France; however, the French government promptly forced its return. The anti-choice lobby has been especially successful in the U.S. where the Food and Drug Administration enacted an import alert against RU 486.

How has the women's movement reacted to RU 486?

So far, feminist groups have strongly supported the testing of RU 486 as a promising development in the much-threatened area of women's reproductive choice. They see RU 486 as a significant medical breakthrough which has the potential to improve the health of women around the world.

A few feminists have criticized RU486 and painted the drug as a cumbersome and risky medication. According to feminists supporters of RU 486, these criticisms seem to be premised on a more general, ideological opposition to all hormone-related drugs and new reproductive technologies. While acknowledging that RU 486 is not yet perfect, its supporters contend that with more research, experience and usage, it will be improved, easier to use and have fewer side effects.

What can I do to have RU 486 tested for use in Canada?

1. You can contact Hoechst-Roussel Canada, which has not made this breakthrough drug available to Canadian women. Encourage the company to allow Canadian trials of RU 486 as a significant alternative to surgical abortion. Write to: Mr. Don Buxton, President, Hoechst-Roussel Canada Inc., 4045 Cote Vertu, Montreal, Quebec, M4R 2E8.

2. Sign the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) petition to request that Canada enforce "the policy of use or lose" the patent held by Roussel-Uclaf in Canada.

3. Help circulate the CARAL petition at the ONDP convention, in your riding, in your union local--wherever.

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